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120822Z Jul 04

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 005786

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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE HAGUE'S VERDICT ON THE
ISRAELI "SEPARATION WALL"

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers over the past two days focuses on the verdict against the International Court of Justice on Israel's "separation wall". Front-page reports highlight worldwide reaction to the verdict, including that of the Jordanian government hailing the verdict. In general, editorial commentaries praise the verdict as a legal and moral "victory" and one that underscores the justice of the Palestinian cause, while expressing criticism of the U.S. reaction to the verdict.

Editorial Commentary

-- Washington as it becomes a stumbling block on the road to peace"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/11): "When the United States turns its back to the highest judicial authority in the world, it is entrenching its commitment to the 'Bush principle' in foreign policy of bypassing the United Nations, international law, adopting unilateral actions away from international partnerships and coalitions, and preemptive war. Had the international court's advisory opinion been stated in relation to any country in the world other than Israel, papers would have already been submitted to the Security Council . and the U.S. representative would have already started making threats of sanctions and preemptive war. Yet the Hague court placed Israel, Washington's pet baby, in the box this time, and so the masters of the White House came out with provocative and rude statements, accusing the court of interference and describing its opinion as a stumbling block on the road to peace and to the roadmap... One who sees the angry American storm towards the Darfour crisis and the suspicious American silence towards the racist wall will realize that the policy of dual standards is being underscored day in and day out. They will also realize that a Washington that claims to be sponsoring the peace process is becoming day after day one of the major stumbling blocks in the way of that process and a detonator of grudges, anger, violence, extremism and terrorism in the region."

-- "The axis of evil"

Daily columnist Basem Sakijha writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/11): "We are afraid that Washington's reaction to the international court's verdict will reach the point of striking the Hague itself with missiles and considering the judges terrorists.. If a question about the most important axes of evil were asked all around the world, the answer would be one: the axis of Washington-Tel Aviv. It is the only axis that considers itself above international legitimacy and uses excessive force in the implementation of its objectives from Iraq to Afghanistan and Palestine and elsewhere, and then does not feel shame to consider others the evil ones and turn facts inside out. The advisory nature of the verdict may not have practical value, but the moral value is important and historic.. Anyhow, the American search for the answer to the question 'why do they hate us?' should start in Washington itself."

-- "No ifs, ands or buts"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (07/11) editorializes: "Even though the verdict of the International Court of Justice . came

as no surprise to the international community as a whole, it is nevertheless a milestone in the development of international law.. While it can be taken for granted the U.N. General Assembly will adopt the necessary resolution on the Israeli wall, it is still uncertain that the U.N. Security Council will follow suit. The United States is expected to veto any resolution that aims to order the dismantling of the controversial wall, especially in the wake of the disclosure that the U.S. judge on the bench of the court was the only dissenting judge on the otherwise unanimous verdict.. This ruling gives added legitimacy to the Palestinian and Arab submissions that any encroachment on the Palestinian territories occupied in the 1967 war including the construction of Jewish settlements thereon is illegal. This is where the court's decision is most far-reaching and with considerable impact on the entire peace process in the Middle East and the projected resumption of peace talks between Israel and the neighboring Arab parties. Accordingly with or without any follow-up action by the U.N. Security Council, the message is now clearer than ever. Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as the construction of the Israeli barrier on Palestinian lands are illegal under international law.

-- "There is justice in this world!"

Daily columnist Mahmoud Rimawi writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (07/11): "This decisive legal battle has been won thanks to the living consciences of the fourteen judges (with the exception of the American judge) and to the actions of Arab countries like Jordan and Egypt in addition to the Palestinian party. This decision proved that there is still justice in our world, and that invasion, abuse and lies do not hold before the rule of justice and the law, even if there is a superpower administration like the Republican Administration that collaborates with injustice and crime."

-- "The battle of the wall: a Jordanian battle as well!"

Daily columnist Sultan Hattab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (07/11): "We have the right to be proud of our country's real support for the just cause of the Palestinian people, particularly when it comes to the aggression represented by the construction of the separation wall.. The [Hague] decision is a victory as well as an important legal and political verdict that could not be diminished by the belittling of it by the Americans, who have appointed themselves policeman for the defense of Israeli aggression. The verdict spreads terror amidst the ruling Israeli institution because it is part of a worldwide counter-campaign against Israeli aggression and the fruit of an international stand that brings justice to the Palestinian people who are suffering from brutality, terrorism and injustice. The verdict expresses the world's intolerance for the Israeli aggressive measures.. While the court verdict is a victory that needs to be translated into mechanisms that rein in the aggression, the ball is now in the international community's court that must make a move on Arab and international levels. Otherwise the regimes and countries' helplessness or lack of neutrality, like that of the United States, could open space for irregular and illegitimate forces to retaliate in their own way, a way that the United States calls terrorism and (that it) hunts down without actually doing anything to prevent its causes."

-- "Jordan welcomes the International Court's verdict"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/11) editorializes: "Right from the beginning, Jordan saw the construction of the Israeli separation wall as ruin to the peace process and to the roadmap.. [This verdict] involves new activity that places Israel face to face with the international community and demands for the first time an answer to the big question: why does the international community accept the presence of a specific state that can reject the implementation of international resolutions without accountability or punishment? Even if the answer is that the United States wants it, the American people then have to ask: for what purpose are we doing this? In short, the gains achieved with the international court's verdict are very big. Even when it rejects the verdict, Israel knows deep down the difficult situation it is about to face before the world. The proof of that is that Israel is now trying to push the

U.S. administration to prevent the issuance of a
Security Council resolution."
HALE